

**Testimony in opposition to Governor Rell's proposal to cut 50%
across the board to all Children Trust Fund Programs**

**Presented by Candida Flores of 941 Slater Road, New Britain
in front of the Appropriations Committee and the Human
Services Committee of the Ct. State Legislature on Thursday,
February 11, 2010**

**Good evening members of the Appropriations and the Human Services
Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to the
governor's proposal to cut 50% across the board to all Children Trust
Fund programs.**

**The Trust Fund programs reach more than 10,000 families a year,
particularly families at risk of child abuse and neglect. The governor's
proposal will have a devastating effect on families served by the
Nurturing Families Network program funded funded by the Trust Fund.
The Nurturing Families program is modeled after the national Healthy
Families Initiative an is monitored by a Continuous Quality Improvement
committee. It is one of the most effective child abuse and neglect
prevention programs in the state with significant data available to
demonstrate its continuous success. The governor's proposal would
specifically eliminate the NFN expansion programs in New Haven and
Hartford and significantly reduce funding to sites in other areas of the
state. Hartford has the highest poverty rate in the state and one of the
highest rates of child abuse and neglect. Reducing funding on some of
the sites and closing existing sites in Hartford and New Haven may
appear to be a cost saving measure upfront, but will cost the state a lot
more in the long run.**

As you know, it cost the state over \$30,000 dollars to intervene with a family through the child protective system, which comes into play after the child has already been abused and in some cases killed.

During a previous testimony, I recommended that you take some time to read the ACE study. The ACE study done by the Center for Disease Control in partnership with Keiser Permanente, conducts a retrospective and prospective analysis of the effect that traumatic experiences during the first 18 years of life of have on adult sexual behavior, medical disease and health cost. The study also demonstrates a correlation between childhood trauma and some of the leading causes of adult mortality and morbidity: obesity, heart disease, depression, smoking, alcoholism, and so on. The study followed 17,000 individuals for a period of 18 years. If any of you is interested, I would gladly e-mail it to you. You can contact me at cflores@familylifeedu.org

Those of us who have been in the human services field for most of our adult lives do not need a study of this magnitude to tell us that child abuse causes irreparable damage on the individual and society in general. We see it every day. In my previous testimony, I told you the story of one of our clients whom we were able to stop from carrying out an elaborate plan to commit suicide. We are still working with that young woman and her 3 year old daughter. After her, we have had to intervene with at least two other clients with similar suicidal ideation.

These are first-time mothers who are referred to our program because of being at risk. Our work does not stop because the state leaders are battling about the budget. We have not received a penny from the state since the beginning of the year, but we cannot just turn these young women away or abandon them to their fate; we have to continue coming to their homes and helping them as much as we can.

The NFN program works with first time pregnant women and first time mothers and follows them and their child for a period of 5 years. This is a successful program with a proven track record. It is certainly more cost effective than most programs within the child protective system and the juvenile justice system. We all know that when children are abused or neglected they are at greater risk for school failure. It costs the educational system twice as much to educate these children. Many of them end up dropping out of school and falling through the cracks. These are the ones that later on join a gang and become part of the criminal justice system. You all also know that it cost much more to maintain an inmate per year than to sponsor a child through a college education.

I am sensitive to the fact that times are difficult and that there must be cuts in order to balance the state budget. However, we also know that there are other areas that have not even been looked at where efficiencies could be put in place. For example, take a closer look at the

structure of the various departments. In some departments, there are more than one deputy commissioner and there are assistants who have assistants, and so on. I personally know state employees who pay less than \$40.00 for full health care coverage for a family of 4. No other organization offers these types of benefits any longer. I strongly encourage you to take a look at other potential areas of savings that do not impact so negatively the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society, our children.